Meeting of WTO in Egypt

1522. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India participated in the informal consultations among the WTO Trade Ministers at Sharm-EI-Sheikh in Egypt in June, 2003;

(b) if so, the details thereof with particular reference to any consensus arrived at for on-going negotiations to liberalise trade in agriculture; and

(c) India's stand on the negotiations on farm goods pertaining to reduction of customs tariffs and subsidies and how the same was appreciated by the other nations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) At this informal mini-ministerial meeting on WTO issues, India highlighted the concerns and interests of the Indian farmers and pointed out that high levels of ambitions in the agricultural market access negotiations in the WTO must be tempered with realism in order to safeguard the interests of millions who depend on agriculture for their livelihood in India. India also articulated that if there is to be progress in the ongoing negotiations on agriculture, the high levels of ambition in terms of market access have to be tempered and special windows in terms of effective special and differential measures have to be provided. Further, provision must also be made for adequate tariff cushioning as even a surge in import of one or two commodities can actually affect the lives of millions of farmers. Category of special products with minimum duty reduction commitments and special safeguard mechanisms for developing countries are extremely important for India. Within WTO, Members have diverse interests and diverse ambitions on the issue of liberalization of agricultural trade. Appreciation of our position has, therefore, been mixed.